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Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: progress and constraints with respect to the well-being of youth and their role in civil society

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/126.

The report addresses the progress achieved and the constraints that young people face in relation to their role in, and contribution to, civil society as well as the progress and challenges faced in ensuring their well-being. The report also proposes goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the above-mentioned areas.

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Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Youth and their well-being	4
	A. Health	4
	B. HIV/AIDS	4
	C. Substance abuse	5
	D. Juvenile justice	6
	E. Girls and young women	7
	F. Armed conflict	8
	G. Goals and targets	10
III.	Youth in civil society	11
	A. Environment	11
	B. Leisure-time activities	11
	C. Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making	12
	D. Intergenerational issues	13
	E. Information and communications technology	13
	F. Goals and targets	14
IV.	Conclusions and recommendations	15
Annexes		
I.	Goals and targets for the cluster "Youth and their well-being"	16
II.	Goals and targets for the cluster "Youth in civil society"	19

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/126, the present report reviews the progress made and constraints that young people face in relation to the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, covered by two of the three Programme clusters: "Youth and their well-being" and "Youth in civil society". The first of the three clusters, "Youth in the global economy", was addressed in a previous report of the Secretary-General (A/62/61-E/2007/7 and Add.1).

2. The report also presents goals and targets for the remaining two clusters based on consultations with Member States; programmes, regional commissions and specialized agencies of the United Nations system; youth-led organizations; and other non-governmental organizations. Experts and representatives from these groups met at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 19 to 21 May 2008 in the context of the expert group meeting to identify and suggest goals and targets for inclusion in the present report. In addition, proposals were also received from stakeholders who could not participate in the meeting.

3. The *World Youth Report 2005*[1] suggested that the 15 priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth be grouped into three clusters — youth in the global economy, youth in civil society, and youth at risk. These clusters were presented as representative of the major contexts in which youth address their shared challenges and concerns. A subsequent report of the Secretary-General reidentified these three clusters and renamed "Youth at risk" as "Youth and their well-being" (A/60/61-E/2005/7). In its resolution 60/2, the General Assembly took note of these three clusters and requested their use in future analyses of the implementation Programme.

4. The present report is built around two remaining clusters dealing with 11 priority themes of the World Programme of Action for Youth: the cluster "Youth and their well-being" covers health, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, girls and young women and armed conflict, while the cluster "Youth in civil society" covers environment, leisure-time activities, full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, intergenerational issues and information and communication technologies. Sections on proposed goals and targets are included in both parts.

5. All of the goals and targets identified in the selection process were further assessed for measurability. To reduce the difficulty of monitoring the large number of goals and targets resulting from the expert group meeting process, two goals, each with related targets, were selected for each priority area. The selected set of goals and targets for each cluster are briefly discussed and presented as annexes. Recommendations to the General Assembly are presented at the conclusion of the report.

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.IV.6.

II. Youth and their well-being

A. Health

6. All world regions have made major progress in improving the health of young people.[2] Investments in the health sector have contributed to these improvements. Access to safe water and sanitation, childhood nutrition programmes, the introduction of health education into school curricula, and expansion in the reach of immunization programmes have also played a role.

7. Particular progress has been made in reproductive health. Recognizing that young people are among the most vulnerable to reproductive health risks, Governments and the international community have made unprecedented efforts to improve knowledge, practices and services in this area.[3] This has contributed to lowering unwanted fertility and maternal mortality among young women. More young women and men today demonstrate accurate and comprehensive knowledge of how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, than ever before.[4]

8. There are still major challenges to youth health. Inequalities abound, with marked overall rural/urban differentials, while those in urban slums experience some of the worst conditions. Unintentional injury is the leading killer of young people in nearly every region of the world, with homicide, war, and interpersonal violence following closely behind. Road traffic accidents are the leading cause of death globally among ages 15 to 19, and the second leading cause for those aged 20 to 24.[5] HIV/AIDS, drug use, violence associated with armed conflict and juvenile delinquency also are areas of strong concern.

9. In both developing and developed countries, changing lifestyles present new challenges to the physical and mental health of youth. Changing consumption patterns and new leisure habits are associated with increasing obesity, which is becoming a major challenge among youth in both developed and developing countries. It is estimated that, in some world regions, obesity is among the top 10 leading causes of preventable disease and death.[6]

B. HIV/AIDS

10. Recent reports suggest that there has been progress in preventing HIV infections and in expanding access to treatment among youth even in the worst affected parts of the world. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on

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[2] *World Youth Report 2007: Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.IV.1).

[3] See D. Kirby, B. A. Laris, and L. Rolleri, *Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries*, Family Health International Youth Research Working Paper Series (2005), available from www.fhi.org.

[4] See statistical information from the Demographic and Health Surveys, at www.measuredhs.com.

[5] See World Health Organization (WHO), *Youth and Road Safety 2007*.

[6] Ogden and others, "Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004", *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2006), vol. 295, No. 13 , pp. 1549-1555; see also World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe, *Prevalence of excess body weight and obesity in children and adolescents*, Fact Sheet No. 2.3 (May 2007).

HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), in 14 of 17 African countries with adequate survey data, the percentage of young pregnant women (ages 15 to 24) who are living with HIV has declined since 2000-2001. In seven countries, the drop in infections has equalled or exceeded the target set out in the United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The proportion of those aged 15 to 19 years who became sexually active before their fifteenth birthday has declined in a number of countries. Condom use has increased among young people.

11. Despite progress, HIV/AIDS continues to place young people's well-being at risk. New infections are concentrated among youth. Those aged 15 to 24 years account for 45 per cent of all new infections worldwide.[7] The HIV prevalence rate for young women is at least twice as that for young men. Young sex workers, the majority of whom are female, are at high risk. HIV infection rates among female sex workers are as high as 73 per cent in Ethiopia, 68 per cent in Zambia, 50 per cent in Ghana and South Africa, and 40 per cent in Benin.[8] A study carried out along major transport routes in Africa found that the average age of sex workers was 22.8 years, and the average level of educational attainment was upper primary school. Only 33 per cent of the respondents knew that they were at risk if they had unprotected sex.[9] These data underscore that it is important to acknowledge and address the HIV education and prevention needs of young people who are sex workers. Attention also needs to be given to their clients, who are also at risk.

12. Although the goal set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS is for 90 per cent of young people to be knowledgeable about HIV by 2005, surveys indicate that fewer than 50 per cent of young people have comprehensive knowledge. Fewer than one in four high-risk people have meaningful access to life skills-based HIV and AIDS information. Helping young people to postpone sexual activity until they have developed the necessary personal and social skills to protect themselves is an important goal of HIV prevention.[10] Youth face particularly difficult challenges with respect to access to treatment. Since they often lack decision-making power and financial resources, they may be the last to receive treatment if they become infected.

C. Substance abuse

13. The overall pattern of drug use among youth is mixed. Following strong increases in the 1990s, amphetamine use is slowing among youth in North America. Since 2001, there have been large declines in use among 10th and 12th graders.[11] The use of cannabis in major markets of Western Europe and North America has also stabilized or declined. Between 1997 and 2007, cannabis use in the United States declined by 27 per cent among 8th to 12th graders, and by 18 per cent among

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[7] See UNAIDS, *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, available from http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2008/jc1510_2008_global_report_pp29_62_en.pdf.

[8] See UNAIDS and World Health Organization, *AIDS Epidemic Update* (UNAIDS/06.29E) (Geneva, December 2006).

[9] UNAIDS and World Health Organization, 2006.

[10] UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Young People, "At the crossroads: accelerating youth access to HIV/AIDS interventions" (2004).

[11] See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2007* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.X.15), available from http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR.html.

12th graders. Similar declines were recorded in Canada, France, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.[12]

14. In other regions of the world, however, the situation is worsening. There have been growing levels of drug consumption among youth in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Africa is increasingly a transit point for drugs trafficked into Europe. There are signs of the emergence of new markets for narcotics in a number of countries and a consolidation of transnational drug trafficking.[2] This has created increased risks for youth, as widespread poverty, unemployment and underemployment make young people a prime target for traffickers. Apart from the threats to health, the increased abuse of drugs by youth, particularly in rapidly expanding urban areas, raises concern over the links between drug abuse and criminal behaviour (see E/CN.7/2001/4).

15. The use of tobacco is also a major challenge to the health of youth. Most people who smoke start using tobacco before the age of 18, almost a quarter of these before the age of 10. Tobacco consumption among girls is increasing around the globe. Advertising and other marketing techniques contribute to the demand for tobacco among young adults. Smokeless tobacco and other products, marketed as "starter" products, or those that are flavoured can be particularly attractive to young people.[13]

16. The South-East Asian region reports an increase in the formerly low levels of alcohol consumption by youth. Recent literature suggests that advertising and other marketing activities increase the overall demand for alcohol and influence teenagers and young adults towards higher consumption and harmful drinking.[14]

D. Juvenile justice

17. Accurate data on juvenile delinquency are difficult to obtain. Crimes committed by young people are often not reported. Recent trends in juvenile delinquency, in particular, are non-existent except for in a few developed countries. Data limitations are also related to the fact that the procedures for dealing with juvenile offenders vary widely, even within countries. The definition of who is a juvenile also differs; thus persons who may be prosecuted as an adult in one context may be tried in the juvenile justice system in another. Some violent crimes committed by young people may be transferred to criminal courts, while others may not.

18. Detention, which is the traditional approach to handling juveniles, has a profoundly negative impact on young people's mental and physical well-being, education, and future employment, reducing the likelihood of them becoming productive and independent adults.[15] The detention experience may make it more

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[12] European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer, "Young people and drugs" (Brussels, June 2004).

[13] World Health Organization, *Tobacco: deadly in any form or disguise* (Geneva, 2006).

[14] "Alcohol consumption control: policy options in the South-East Asia region", report submitted to the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, fifty-ninth session, Dhaka, 22-25 August 2006 (SEA/RC59/15 (Rev.2)).

[15] Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg, "Dangers of detention: the impact of incarcerating youth in detention and other secure facilities", report of the Justice Policy Institute (November 2006).

likely that youth will continue to engage in delinquent behaviour, further compromising the prospect of long-term well-being.

19. Youth are also likely to suffer health consequences from incarceration. For one third of incarcerated youth diagnosed with depression, the onset of the depression occurred after they began their incarceration. Further, poor mental health may have precipitated delinquency in the first place, and the conditions of confinement may interact and make it more likely that youth will engage in suicide and self-harm.[16]

20. In recent years, children and adolescents who become delinquent are increasingly being viewed as victims, since they are often morally, cognitively, physically and emotionally less mature than adults. The majority of youth involved in crime are victims of neglect, abuse, exploitation, poverty and other forms of marginalization. Prior to becoming perpetrators, most children and adolescents have somehow been victimized and to some degree have not had their basic needs met. For some, committing crimes is a means of survival.

E. Girls and young women

21. While, the World Programme of Action for Youth considers issues related to girls and young women as a separate priority area within the cluster "Youth and their well-being", all areas of the Programme have strong gender dimensions.

22. There has been progress in mainstreaming the needs of girls and young women in all areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In the area of girls' education, the gender parity index for gross enrolment in primary education rose from an estimated 0.92 in 1999 to 0.95.[17] The literacy rate for female youth increased from 79.2 per cent in the period 1985-1994 to 86.8 per cent for 2005-2007. In Latin America and the Caribbean, girls are outperforming boys in secondary education. Yet young women's transition rates to secondary school are still of major concern. For example, it is estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern and Western Asia only 44 per cent of secondary students are female.[18]

23. Women's participation in paid, non-agricultural employment has continued to increase slowly, particularly in those regions in which women have the least presence in the labour market.[19] In addition, gender wage gaps seem to be decreasing in the majority of economies with available data.[20] However, in most regions of the world, young women experience more difficulties than young men in finding decent employment.[2]

24. Many young women and girls remain at risk of premature death from maternal causes, including early pregnancy and unsafe abortions. The proportion of

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[16] J. H. Kashani, G.W. Manning and others, "Depression among incarcerated delinquents", *Psychiatry Research*, vol. 3, pp. 185-191 (October 1980); see also C. B. Forrest, E. Tambor and others, "The health profile of incarcerated male youths", *Pediatrics* vol. 105, No. 1, Supplement (2000), pp. 286-291.

[17] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, at uis.unesco.org. The gender parity index (GPI) is the ratio of female to male gross enrolment in primary education. A GPI of one indicates parity between the sexes.

[18] See uis.unesco.org.

[19] United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2007 (United Nations, 2007).

[20] International Labour Office, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, Fifth Edition (Geneva, 2007).

unplanned or unwanted pregnancies among adolescents varies widely within and between world regions. The range of unplanned pregnancies among adolescent girls is highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in some sub-Saharan African countries, where up to 50 per cent of adolescent mothers reported that their pregnancies were unplanned.[21] Girls and young women who become pregnant are often forced to leave school. This compromises their ability to acquire the foundation to enable them to make a successful transition to decent work and independence. Girls and young women remain particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Of the 5.4 million youth living with HIV, 58.5 per cent are female.[22]

25. Measures to protect girls and young women from various forms of violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, trafficking and sexual abuse are inadequate, and policies often lack legal backing or enforcement. Violence against girls and young women has been recognized as an urgent issue and is being addressed in a major initiative of the Secretary-General on violence against women (see A/61/122/Add.1).

26. In many countries, young women have limited decision-making power over routine activities — they cannot make decisions on issues relating to their health care, daily purchases, or visits to friends and family. As girls enter adolescence, their mobility and social contacts may be restricted, leading to social isolation.

F. Armed conflict

27. The number of active armed conflicts in the world each year since 2000 continues to fluctuate between 30 and 40 after having reached 55 early in the 1990s.[23] In armed conflicts youth often play a role as perpetrators, but are also often victims, even when not directly engaged in combat. In recent years, emphasis has been placed on preventing the engagement of children and youth in armed conflict, as illustrated by the 119 ratified or acceded participants to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of youth and children in armed conflict.

28. There has also been progress in improving the post-conflict reintegration of young people into society. Many thousands of young soldiers have left armed forces as many long-running conflicts have ended.[24] Through demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes, Governments and various non-governmental organizations and United Nations system agencies have worked to reintegrate these youth into their communities and to ensure socio-economic rehabilitation, skills development and community development. The United Nations Development Programme has operated reintegration programmes focused on the socio-economic rehabilitation of youth, and the International Labour Organization has had similar

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[21] World Health Organization, *Adolescent pregnancy: Unmet needs and undone deeds: A review of the literature and programmes* (Geneva, 2007).

[22] United Nations, "Growing together: youth and the work of the United Nations" (New York, 2008).

[23] See Harbom and others, "Dyadic dimensions of armed conflict, 1946 to 2007", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 45, No. 5 (September 2008), figure 1, p. 699.

[24] See *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, prepared by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, available from http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/.

initiatives.[25] Other United Nations organizations, such as UNESCO, have focused on sustaining and/or rebuilding education in post-conflict situations.[26]

29. Youth continue to constitute a large part of armed militias whenever violent conflicts arise around the world.[27] Despite international consensus and effort, the United Nations Children's Fund reports an estimated 300,000 children and youth, under the age of 18, currently participating in armed conflict. Most soldiers under 18 are members of non-State armed groups. This presents difficulties for international efforts to protect these youth and children, as non-State groups have less national and international legal oversight than national Governments. Informally enlisted youth may also be harder to account for in situations of demobilization.

30. Economic incentives, social and political exclusion, unemployment, dissatisfaction with public services, and the breakdown of traditional family and social networks, are among the factors pushing youth into the combatant role.[28] This suggests a need to go beyond reintegration in post-conflict areas. The research literature also suggests that youth bulges increase both opportunities and motives for political violence.[29] This implies that in parts of the world where population growth rates are high, the threat of youth violence may also remain high.

31. Ongoing conflict situations pose a threat to the health of young people. Some of the most disturbing effects on the health of young people living in areas of armed conflict are anxiety, depression, stress and post-traumatic stress disorders, as well as self-inflicted injury and suicide. Other direct and indirect health consequences associated with conflict include the displacement of populations, the breakdown of health and social services, and the heightened risk of disease transmission. Young people are often among the victims of the violence and brutality that occur in periods of conflict, rendering them susceptible to physical disability.

32. Although a number of initiatives to address the needs of ex-combatants are currently in existence, limited numbers of ex-combatants become involved. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, for example, may not reach young people who are in greatest need. The percentage of female beneficiaries of such programmes, in particular, is often in the single digits, often stemming from fears of stigmatization.[30]

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[25] United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis?* (New York, 2006).

[26] See UNESCO projects on Education in Situations of Emergency, Crisis and Reconstruction, at http://www.unesco.org.

[27] Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Youth in crisis: coming of age in the 21st century", *IRIN In-Depth*, special series (February 2007), available from http://newsite.irinnews.org/pdf/indepth/Youth-in-crisis-IRIN-In-Depth.pdf (accessed on 13 May 2007); see also *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, op. cit.

[28] A synopsis of these findings can be found in "Youth and violent conflict: a toolkit for intervention", Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2005).

[29] Henrik Urdal, "A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence", International Studies Quarterly, vol. 50, No. 3 (2006), pp. 607-629.

[30] UNDP, *Youth and Violent Conflict*, op. cit.; see also *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, op. cit.

G. Goals and targets

33. The above-mentioned expert group meeting held in May 2008 produced numerous suggestions of goals and targets for the cluster "Youth and their well-being". Those summarized below, and presented in more detail in annex I, were chosen for their global relevance, scope and measurability.

34. The goals and targets for health highlight the need to have access to affordable and comprehensive health information and services, including on diseases related to lifestyle choices. They seek to minimize the prevalence of reproductive health morbidities and mortality, promote training for health professionals in the identification and treatment of common sexually transmitted infections, and ensure that health facilities have adequate resources for providing care, and youth-friendly counselling. They also suggest that interventions must address the distances that young people have to travel to reach health care, and highlight the importance of ensuring that formal and non-formal education include elements that address the health impacts of poor diets, lack of exercise and smoking.

35. The Millennium Development Goals target to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS cannot be achieved without a specific focus on youth. Achieving this will require that all young people are knowledgeable about HIV and how to prevent it. The recommended goals and targets thus seek to ensure that those most vulnerable to infection are reached, and that their social and economic vulnerability is given attention. The availability of opportunities for testing is also important in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. These goals and targets also seek to eliminate all forms of discrimination and stigma against young people infected with HIV/AIDS.

36. The proposed goals and targets address the need to reduce substance abuse by young people by focusing on both supply and demand reduction. Attention is also given to youth access to substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation programmes, as well as the need to include, in these programmes, alternative income-earning strategies and skills training to facilitate reintegration into society.

37. The suggested goals and targets recognize that the first key step and objective in the area of juvenile justice is to reduce the involvement of youth in crime. Access to traditional and vocational education, as well as increased employment opportunities, are highlighted as key in achieving this end. Protection of youth offenders in the justice system is also emphasized, in particular by ensuring the physical and legal separation of juvenile from adult judicial and penal systems and by reducing the number of juveniles committed to locked institutions. Also addressed is the need for all those who work with juvenile delinquents to receive training in non-violent crisis intervention.

38. Consistent with Millennium Development Goals on gender, the goals and targets in this priority area seek to promote gender equality. Highlighted are the need to ensure the availability of facilities and services required to enable the full engagement of girls and young women in society, and the need to engage boys and young men in promoting gender equality. The goals and targets also seek to eliminate violence against women and girls. Attention is given to the introduction of units into all basic education curricula to address gender-based violence in a relevant and comprehensive manner, and to ensuring that every case of violence against girls and young women is actively investigated and prosecuted.

39. The proposed goals and targets recognize that interventions to address the engagement of youth in armed conflict must, above all, focus on building a culture of peace. The role of education systems in building this culture of peace is reflected, as well as the need to reduce the prevalence of light weapons which contribute to violence. Also addressed is the need to engage youth in conflict prevention and reconstruction, including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

III. Youth in civil society

A. Environment

40. Young people have a strong interest in protecting and preserving the planet's resources. They have been active in major United Nations initiatives on the environment from the Earth Summit to the recent global meetings on climate change. A youth caucus made up of delegates from Member States and non-governmental organizations actively participates in the annual sessions of the Commission for Sustainable Development.

41. Young people are vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation, which is intricately linked to health. The vast majority of the world's youth live in developing countries where lack of resources hinder efforts to respond to environmental degradation. These youth are especially vulnerable to the risks of disease, such as infectious, parasitic and water-borne diseases.[31] In many developing countries, youth — especially girls and young women — are responsible for transporting water, collecting fuelwood and farming. These tasks are rendered more difficult with increased deterioration of the environment and take even more time away from education or other productive activities.[32] In addition to suffering the negative health consequences of poor quality sanitation, housing, water and other basic environmental resources now, young people will also bear the consequences further into the future.

42. Education could be one of the most effective tools to combat the destructive potential of climate change and other environmental degradation, as it cultivates an international understanding among members of the next generation. For example, sustainable consumption is an integral element of sustainable development and empowers young people to make the choice to consume products differently and efficiently; this can ultimately shape sustainable production patterns as well.

B. Leisure-time activities

43. The amount and quality of leisure time (when they are neither attending to academic pursuits at work nor doing household chores) available to young people

[31] K. M. Shea, MD, MPH, and the Committee on Environmental Health, "Global climate change and children's health", *Pediatrics*, vol. 120, No. 5 (October 2007), pp. 1359-1367 (American Academy of Pediatrics).

[32] See Working Group II Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Fourth Assessment Report, "Climate change 2007: climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability", available through the Global Policy Forum, at http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/envronmt/climate/index.htm.

varies considerably according to age, gender and culture. What young people do with leisure time can determine how well they acquire social skills and learn about civic responsibility.

44. Culture, entertainment, art, volunteerism and sport play a pivotal role in individual social, cognitive, psychomotor and affective development and also promote community unification and development.[33] A lack of choice and structure of leisure-time activities can place youth and their communities at risk. Limited choices and opportunities for constructive leisure activities can foster habits and practices that are detrimental to the long-term well-being of youth. Youth show signs of strain and depression in contexts where there is little or no leisure time.

45. The value of leisure time may not be equally recognized across society. When public funds are stretched, financing of sports, recreation and cultural programmes and institutions are often first to be cut. Similarly, when school timetables become crowded, leisure activities, especially organized sports, may be sacrificed. In some contexts, young girls are discouraged, ridiculed or punished for participating in leisure-time activities, especially sports.

C. Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making

46. Young people who have opportunities for participation in their communities have a better chance at successfully transitioning to adulthood. Those who are marginalized and lack such opportunities are more likely to feel alienated and hopeless and engage in high-risk and antisocial behaviour. Where young people have participated more fully in their communities, and where countries have been able to take advantage of a very large pool of young labour, youth have been a strong, positive force in the development of their societies.

47. There are many positive examples of youth participation, including volunteer activities in various areas of community development. Involvement in national youth councils and engagement in the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers reflect a more active effort at the national and international levels to promote youth participation in decision-making. In Africa, for instance, various examples illustrate how youth are becoming involved in tackling deep-seated economic and social problems.[2] These activities promote social inclusion, providing youth with labour market skills and contributing to national and community development.

48. Nevertheless, obstacles to the full participation of youth in society remain. Too often, youth participation in adult-organized or political activities may be tokenistic or symbolic. Approaches to engaging youth are frequently shaped by the expectations of adults, which limits the input of young people.[34] Opportunities for participation also vary across socio-economic groups. Although many avenues for participation are available through youth organizations, many lack funding and other resources. Coordination across these organizations is also often weak or lacking.

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[33] See outline of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Youth Empowerment Project (September 2006).

[34] S. Maira, "Youth and participation in decision-making", paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on Goals and Targets for the World Programme of Action for Youth, 19-21 May 2008, United Nations, New York.

D. Intergenerational issues

49. The bonds and mutual support of young and old across generations have formed the basis of healthy societies around the world. These relationships generate positive outcomes in families in terms of sharing and exchange of financial and non-financial resources, the provision of care and emotional support, and through the preservation of knowledge and culture.

50. In recent years, demographic shifts and changes in family structure have created new challenges for intergenerational cohesion. Societies are facing a growing divide between younger and older generations. For many young people, globalization has enabled access to new ideas about the world and their place within it. While this exposure carries many benefits for a young person's development, it can also result in wide cultural gaps between the young and old. To bridge the divide, greater interactions between generations for the sharing of knowledge and experience as well as reciprocal care and support are vital.

51. Globally, life expectancy is projected to increase from 65 years in 2000-2005 to 75 years in 2045-2050; yet many countries lack the necessary infrastructure to manage the effects of population ageing and the capacity to deliver sustainable social protection programmes (see E/CN.5/2007/7). This means that interdependence between younger and older persons will increase. Households of four generations will not be uncommon, although presently, a shift from cohabitation of extended nuclear families to much smaller households is occurring in many regions. Many older persons are living on their own at a time when they are most likely to need the support of the younger generation.

E. Information and communications technology

52. Youth today live in a world characterized by dramatic cultural, economic, and social opportunities and challenges. Arguably, there is no area where these opportunities and challenges affect youth well-being as they do in the area of information and communications technology (ICT).

53. As a result of its pervasive nature, ICT is causing rapid transformations in all areas of young people's lives. Youth use ICT for entertainment, social networking, seeking jobs, and gathering information on better economic and social opportunities. The emergence of social utility networks has expanded global networking opportunities for young people.

54. ICT has also been used to address health needs. For example, the use of television media in HIV/AIDS awareness programmes has led to improved attitudes among youth.[35] There is increasing recognition of the benefits of online discussion groups for youth to communicate their comments and concerns on sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS.[36]

55. An important challenge is how to ensure that all young people have access to ICT, regardless of location or socio-economic status. The newest and most effective ICT applications are often expensive for youth in developing countries.[37] Further,

[35] See http://www.digitalopportunity.org/article/view/135706/1/.

[36] Review Nigeria's Learning About Living portal at http://www.learningaboutliving.org/south.

[37] Rajendra Mulmi, "Effects of ICT on youth activism in Asia", presented at the Regional Expert Group Meeting on Development Challenges for Young People in Asia, Bangkok, 28-30 March 2006.

there are constraints related to the language of most media content. According to estimates, there are some 3,000 to 4,000 languages in the world, but most websites provide only English content. Another challenge relates to safety. As avid users of digital media, youth are vulnerable to online abuses such as fraud and exploitation.

F. Goals and targets

56. The proposed goals and targets for the cluster "Youth and civil society", contained in annex II, were chosen from among the numerous suggestions of the experts and other stakeholders, based on their measurability and relative significance.

57. These goals and targets aim to address the need for both formal and non-formal environmental education, and the importance of ensuring that all teachers at primary and secondary levels and community leaders are trained accordingly. Increasing the participation of youth in public and private sector efforts to promote environmental protection is also important. Related targets thus seek to increase opportunities for youth to contribute to the design and implementation of environmental initiatives and to increase youth involvement in the implementation of these initiatives at the community level. Emphasis is also placed on preparing young people to be employed in renewable and sustainable energies sectors.

58. The goals and targets include protecting the rights of all youth, especially young women, to leisure-time activities and promoting national recognition of the value of young people's access to recreation, art, culture, and sports. Also recognized is the need for exposure to these activities through national school curricula.

59. The goals and targets address the need to ensure full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in the decision-making process. Youth participation is encouraged at all levels of decision-making. The establishment and full recognition of national youth councils is encouraged. Emphasis is also placed on the need to formulate national youth policies and make the necessary budgetary provisions.

60. The goals and targets seek to promote intergenerational solidarity by calling for the creation of opportunities for voluntary, constructive and regular interaction between young people and older generations. Programmes to support mutual respect of youth and older persons are highlighted as necessary to facilitate cohesion. Attention is also given to the need to develop and implement national policies to promote flexibility in work scheduling to enable intergenerational caregivers to remain in the workforce, and to eliminate untenable age-related barriers to entry, advancement, continuation and exit in the workplace.

61. The goals and targets aim to achieve universal access of young people to a basic level of ICT. Special emphasis is placed on the need for free and easy access to the Internet for learning and other educational development purposes. The need to address the relevance, appropriateness and safety of ICT is also recognized, as is the need to ensure variety in content languages.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

62. The present report suggests that much progress has occurred in the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth since its adoption in 1995. But alongside progress and achievements, new challenges have emerged, and others have intensified. While the goals and targets identified in this report are not exhaustive by definition, they are important for implementing the Programme in a focused and systematic manner and in overcoming the challenges in the priority areas covered by the present report.

63. It is also important to note that the existence of goals and targets is a first step which does not, by itself, address the challenges before the international community in the area of youth development. It is essential for Governments, United Nations entities, civil society, the private sector and young people to take action to ensure that the goals and targets identified in this and the previous report of the Secretary-General on youth in the global economy (A/62/61-E/2007/7 and Add.1) become integral parts of national planning in all sectors and in all countries.

64. It is also clear that the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth are closely interrelated and progress or challenges in one area affects other areas. There are also strong interactions between what happens to youth and what happens in other parts of the population. It is essential to consider investments in youth as investments in society as a whole. By recognizing and addressing the potential for intergenerational transfer of the consequences of today's action or inaction on issues related to youth, there can be sustained improvement in the long-term well-being of young women and men and in their contributions to civil society.

65. In light of the above, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations to:

(a) **Decide to adopt the proposed goals and targets to assist Governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to monitor progress in young people's well-being and their engagement with civil society;**

(b) **Encourage regular data collection at the national and international levels to facilitate the monitoring of the goals and targets in the present report. In this connection, the General Assembly may wish to emphasize the importance of ensuring that data collection results in data which are comparable across countries and can be collected on a regular basis to update trends;**

(c) **Encourage Governments to work together with youth-led organizations and other stakeholders such as the private sector in order to achieve the proposed goals and targets;**

(d) **Urge countries to learn from each other to achieve the proposed goals and targets through the sharing of good practices, while recognizing that national situations may require adaptation of the goals and targets;**

(e) **Emphasize the need for the international community, Governments and the private sector to support youth-led organizations to broaden their membership and to strengthen their capacity to participate in national and international development activities.**

Annex I

Goals and targets for the cluster "Youth and their well-being"

Goals	*Targets*
Health	
Goal 1: Ensure that youth have access to affordable and comprehensive health information and services, including on diseases related to lifestyle choices	Target 1:1: between 2005 and 2015, halve the proportion of youth living more than an hour from a source of comprehensive, youth-friendly, primary health-care services
	Target 1:2: by 2015, ensure that curricula for both formal and non-formal basic education include elements that address the impact of lifestyle choices on health, such as poor diets, lack of exercise and smoking
Goal 2: Minimize the prevalence of reproductive health morbidities and mortality, including sexually transmitted infections among youth	Target 2:1: by 2015, ensure that all those providing primary health care to youth receive training on the identification and treatment of common STIs, have the needed technical and material resources to provide care, and are able to counsel on prevention in a youth-friendly manner
	Target 2:2: by 2015, ensure that cost-effective treatments for common STIs are available for young people
HIV/AIDS	
Goal 1: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people	Target 1:1: by 2015, ensure that all young people in both rural and urban areas can correctly identify the modes of transmission of HIV and how to prevent it
	Target 1:2: between 2005 and 2015, reduce by 50 per cent, the proportion of young people, especially young women, who live in poverty or other forms of social or economic vulnerability
	Target 1:3: by 2015, ensure that all young people have access to voluntary HIV testing
Goal 2: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and stigma against young people infected with HIV/AIDS	Target 2:1: by 2015, establish intervention strategies for young people (including information, counselling and coping skills) at the individual and community level to reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS
	Target 2:2: by 2015, enact and begin to enforce legislation to ensure the provision of care and treatment, on an equal basis with adults, and without discrimination or stigma, for all youth infected with HIV and AIDS
Substance abuse	
Goal 1: Eliminate substance abuse by young people	Target 1:1: with immediate effect, intensify the implementation of efforts to stem the supply of drugs to young people
	Target 1:2: between 2005 and 2015, reduce by two thirds, the proportion of youth using alcohol, tobacco or other harmful substances

Goals	*Targets*
	Target 1:3: by 2015, develop and implement legislation to eliminate alcohol and tobacco marketing to those under the age of 21 years
	Target 1:4: by 2015, establish, in collaboration with young people, youth-friendly, evidence-based early intervention and substance abuse prevention programmes
Goal 2: Ensure that youth have access to substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation programmes	Target 2:1: between 2005 and 2015, increase by 50 per cent the number of young substance abusers who have access to affordable, youth-friendly treatment
	Target 2:2: between 2005 and 2015, increase by 50 per cent the number of young substance abusers who have access to harm-reduction programmes, including the provision of condoms, needles, counselling and substitution therapy
	Target 2:3: by 2015, ensure that all drug rehabilitation programmes for youth include alternative income-earning strategies and skills training to facilitate reintegration into society
Juvenile justice	
Goal 1: Reduce youth involvement in crime	Target 1:1: between 2005 and 2015, reduce by 50 per cent the number of youth who are not in employment or education
	Target 1:2: between 2005 and 2015, increase by 50 per cent the proportion of juvenile delinquents who receive further education and training in vocational skills as part of their rehabilitation
Goal 2: Ensure that law enforcement, judicial systems and rehabilitation services are safe, fair and promote the well-being of youth	Target 2:1: by 2015, develop and begin to implement measures to ensure the complete physical and legal separation of juvenile from adult judicial and penal systems and reduce the number of juveniles committed to locked institutions by 50 per cent between 2005 and 2015
	Target 2:2: by 2015, ensure that all law enforcement personnel and social workers who work with juvenile delinquents receive specific training in non-violent crisis intervention
Girls and young women	
Goal 1: Promote gender equality	Target 1:1: by 2015, ensure that girls and young women have the same opportunities, as do boys and young men, to enter education and employment and to progress across levels
	Target 1:2: by 2015, ensure the availability of facilities and services that are required to enable the full engagement in society of young women and girls
	Target 1:3: ensure that by 2015, forums are established for males to contribute to the discussion of gender equality through civil society and other community organizations

Goals	*Targets*
Goal 2: Eliminate violence against girls and young women	Target 2:1: by 2010, introduce into all basic education curricula, units that address gender-based violence in a relevant and comprehensive manner
	Target 2:2: by 2015, ensure that every case of violence against girls and young women is actively investigated and prosecuted
Armed conflict	
Goal 1: Promote a culture and environment of peace among youth	Target 1:1: by 2015, ensure that units to promote the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding among all peoples are included in the curricula of all formal and non-formal education programmes
	Target 1:2: between 2005 and 2015, double the level of investment in youth formal and non-formal and vocational education in conflict zones, ensuring that curricula are relevant, non-discriminatory, and holistic
	Target 1:3: between 2005 and 2015, reduce by 50 per cent, the availability of small arms and light weapons
Goal 2: Promote the participation of youth in all conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction efforts	Target 2:1: by 2015, establish mechanisms of youth governance, participation and advocacy, such as youth councils, forums, and networks, at local and national levels in all post-conflict regions
	Target 2:2: by 2015, ensure that all disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes engage youth in all aspects of their work

Annex II

Goals and targets for the cluster "Youth in civil society"

Goals	*Targets*
Environment	
Goal 1: Ensure environmental awareness among youth	Target 1:1: by 2015, ensure that environmental awareness components or modules are included in the curricula of every formal and non-formal education programme
	Target 1:2: by 2010, introduce and begin to implement programmes to ensure that by 2015 at least 50 per cent of all teachers at primary and secondary levels and community leaders receive training to enable them to provide instruction and guidance on environmentally responsible habits
Goal 2: Increase the participation of youth in public and private-sector efforts to promote environmental protection	Target 2:1: by 2015, ensure that at least 50 per cent of environmental initiatives at public and private-sector levels, and at national and community levels, provide opportunities for youth to contribute to the design and implementation of these initiatives
	Target 2:2: by 2015, set national and community benchmarks for monitoring the level of recycling and establish community-level programmes to give youth leadership roles in promoting waste reduction and waste recycling in their communities
Goal 3: Enhance the preparedness of youth to be employed in renewable and sustainable energies sectors	Target 3:1: by 2015, ensure that secondary and vocational school curricula are geared towards preparing youth for careers consistent with clean and sustainable technologies
	Target 3:2: between 2005 and 2015 increase by 25 per cent, the percentage of youth who are employed in jobs in sustainable development and renewable energies sectors
Leisure-time activities	
Goal 1: Protect the rights of all youth, especially young women, to leisure time and enhance opportunities for the constructive and safe exercise of this right	Target 1:1: by 2015, halt all forms of exploitation of young people through work and the denial of their rights to leisure in a manner that is consistent with article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
	Target 1:2: by 2010, initiate an evaluation — using community teams that include young women and men — of opportunities for safe recreation and leisure-time activities for youth, and by 2015 begin to develop appropriate spaces and resources for youth leisure based on these findings
Goal 2: Promote national recognition of the value of young people's access to recreation, art, culture, and sports	Target 2:1: by 2015, ensure that all schools integrate art, culture and sport activities into their curricula and provide a minimum of three hours each week for these activities

Goals	*Targets*
	Target 2:2: by 2015, demonstrate national recognition of the value of young people's access to art, culture, sport activities and other recreational opportunities by creating a National Youth Recreation Day on which the value of safe and constructive recreation is recognized and communicated through media, private and public sector outlets
Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making	
Goal 1: Ensure full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making processes	Target 1:1: by 2015, provide formal opportunities for young people, through their organizations, to contribute to all local, municipal and national decision-making
	Target 1:2: where they already exist, ensure that by 2015, the value of the contribution of National Youth Councils to development is acknowledged publicly at the highest levels of government; where they do not exist, facilitate the establishment of National Youth Councils by 2015
Goal 2: Ensure the articulation and implementation of policies to address youth development as a vital part of development planning	Target 2:1 by 2015, ensure that all Governments articulate a comprehensive national youth policy and provide the resources to fund specific policy elements within their national budgets
Intergenerational issues	
Goal 1: Promote opportunities for voluntary, constructive and regular interaction between young people and older generations	Target 1:1: between 2005 and 2015, increase by 50 per cent the number of community programmes that allow older and younger persons to interact and engage in cooperative activities. Where such programmes do not exist, by 2010, engage youth and older persons to plan for their creation
	Target 1:2: by 2015, develop and implement national policies to promote flexibility in work scheduling to enable intergenerational caregivers to remain in the workforce
Goal 2: Promote mutual respect between youth and older persons	Target 2:1: by 2015, design and begin to implement awareness-raising campaigns, through the media, schools and community-level organizations, which improve mutual respect between youth and older people
	Target 2:2: by 2015, eliminate age-related barriers to entry, advancement, continuation and exit in the workplace, especially those that discriminate against youth
Information and communications technology	
Goal 1: Achieve universal access of young people to a basic level of information and communications technology	Target 1:1: ensure that by 2015, all youth, including those in rural areas, living in poverty, indigenous youth, young persons with disabilities and other marginalized youth, have access to the Internet within 1 mile of their homes

Goals	*Targets*
	Target 1:2: by 2015, ensure that all educational institutions provide free access to the Internet for learning and other educational development purposes
Goal 2: Ensure the relevance, appropriateness and safety of youth access to information and communications technology	Target 2:1: by 2015, begin to produce locally developed content in local languages for dissemination through information and communications technology
	Target 2:2: by 2015, develop and implement national policies to protect youth from the harmful and inappropriate content conveyed through information and communications technology, while ensuring their freedom of expression and access to information